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STAT

MCLEAN, Va.

Cia

The CIA held an unprecedented Town Hall meeting at agency headquarters Tuesday night to explain a building expansion proposal to a largely unreceptive audience of residents of this affluent Washington suburb.

Several hundred citizens showed up -- by invitation only -- at the CIA's heavily wooded enclave to hear details of the \$190-million plan for a new, 1-million-square-foot building for 3,000 employees now working in the metropolitan Washington area.

Spokesmen for the 50,000 residents of the McLean area, which includes many estates and elegant homes, did not like what they heard. Many are concerned about traffic congestion they say is already intolerable.

A score or more of McLean residents, none of whom identified themselves, took their turns at the microphone in the agency's white, igloo-shaped auditorium.

"We have a first class public relations problem here," one citizen told Harry Fitzwater, head of the CIA's directorate for administration, and Larry Myers, head of the building project office. "I don't think your traffic plan is worth a pile of beans," the citizen said.

Another resident strode to the microphone and said amid loud applause, "You are going to be robbing us of the quality of our lives. You are damaging our homes, our lives."

Mothers complained of the peril to their children who cannot safely cross the roads because of present traffic.

Some 20,000 CIA employees -- the exact number is classified -- now work at the present headquarters.

Fitzwater and Myers opened the two-hour session with a talk and slide show to demonstrate that, with the improvement of certain access roads and traffic control, the area should be able to cope with the increased traffic.

But they conceded frankly under questioning, because the roads involved include both federal park and state highways, they do not know who would foot the bill.

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